

**Notes from Community Meeting
10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness
City of Long Beach**

Date: Saturday September 10, 2005
Time: 1- 3 PM
Location: Fire Station
5365 E. 2nd Street, City of Long Beach,
3rd District (Frank Colonna, Council Member)

Opening Remarks:

Joe Colletti, Consultant from the Institute for Urban Research and Development (IURD), made the opening remarks and explained the purpose of the meeting. It was explained that several jurisdictions throughout the country have been putting together strategies to reduce homelessness in cities. Part of their success has been due to their ability to obtain feedback from all segments of cities unlike ever before. The meeting was called in order to gather comments from the general public in the 3rd District of the City of Long Beach concerning homelessness to inform a Working Group and ultimately a Steering Committee established by the Mayor to make recommendations to the City of Long Beach 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness. Attendees were encouraged to complete a Volunteer Survey if they wished to become part of the Working Group that will advise the Steering Committee on homelessness issues. Attendees were also encouraged to take a Public Comment sheet for future comments.

Mr. Colletti introduced the following individuals:

Ms. Avonne Gravel staff from Frank Colonna's office, Council member of the 3rd District
Susan Price from the Department of Health and Human Services
Connie Sziebl, Field Deputy, Don Knabe's Office, LA County Board of Supervisors
Jack Smith, HASAC (?)
Jack Garrett, IURD

Mr. Colletti explained the agenda and process for the meeting. First, individuals were encouraged to take a card to speak publicly. Second, there was a time for discussion. Rules of order were explained to the participants. No individual spoke for more than 5 min.

Summary of Public Comments:

- Hana Shafer - League of Women Voters
It is time to revisit the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program that has long been opposed by the City of Long Beach but that has been successfully implemented by other cities such as San Francisco. The program should include careful administration and monitoring through case management. The development of a plan also requires mental health services that are readily available to homeless individuals that are mentally ill.

- Stephanie O'Connor - Homeless Person
Spoke at a Council meeting three weeks before the current meeting where she asked for resources and was told there were resources available for homeless individuals. So far resources have not been reliable. It is not difficult to find showers or places to do laundry but resources to help people find a home are not there. She also noted that the "Cops" finger point the homeless and ticket them for things that also other people do.
- Jerry Stinson – Senior Minister, First Congregational Church
Has lived in the City of Long Beach for 5 years now. Has not seen a serious commitment on behalf of the City Council to address homelessness. Long Beach is ranked 6th in the nation when it comes to poverty. Long Beach is also 3rd in the nation when it comes to children living in poverty. Nurses graduating in Long Beach cannot afford to live in Long Beach any more. Homelessness is not just SRO. It would be worth considering the Housing Trust Fund that got pushed back by City officials. There is great concern about people from N. Orleans, but there is no concern for local homeless people.
- Terry Timmons – Non-profit for the homeless
Has worked for HUD in Los Angeles for the last 6 years particularly in the disposition of property for the homeless. There needs to be a coordinated effort by different agencies that already provide an infrastructure (churches, food banks, mental health agencies, hospitals) in order to address the problem of the homeless. There should be a one-stop information center where people can go to obtain information about services that are reliable. There are programs that have been successful in other areas such as Chicago and Miami. Not all people are mentally ill. People for the most part have skills and can help themselves. Would like to receive the notes for this meeting in the near future.
- Annette La Barca – Homeless Advocate
Has worked as an advocate for the homeless for the last two months. She is concerned and upset about widespread ticketing of the homeless by the police. For example, two individuals were ticketed the day before the meeting for smoking at the beach. Also, there is lack of coordination between LA County and the City of Long Beach officers, i.e., removal of tents by the City that the County has authorized and the trash cans by the river that neither the County nor the City come to pick up.
- Dona Marinos – Previously homeless person
There needs to be a realization that when rents go up unexpectedly (e.g., up to \$140 per month) people are displaced. Talked about her own experience as a homeless person. Stated there needs to be some form of rent control in Long Beach. Stated her own children cannot afford an apartment on their own in the City of Long Beach.
- Margie Tapia – Homeless person
Has been homeless for 3-4 months and has lived at the park. Stated there is quite a bit of ticketing going on for simply sitting at the park. Some people do not have jobs

because they have felony records. It is also true that some people also take advantage of the system. It is sad when “kids witness people getting doped.” Need to train mothers not to do drugs or drink alcohol.

- Bob Bishoff
Dealing with homelessness requires a multipronged solution. Concerned that the current effort to alleviate homelessness is only from the City of Long Beach and not a regional effort. Concerned about attracting homeless people from other areas.
- Curt Coufin
Also agreed that there should be a regional approach. Had a question concerning where he could refer homeless individuals in the City where they can receive services or assistance (shelter, food, etc). Person was directed to Jack Garret from IURD and Susan Price from DHHS.

Summary of Discussion

Solicited feedback on three main points that 10-Year Strategies from other cities have taken into account and that reportedly have lowered the numbers of homeless people: Chronic Homeless, Homeless Prevention, and Transitional Homeless Persons.

The Chronic Homeless

A person is chronically homeless if he or she has been without housing for one year or more, or four times in three years, and has a disability.

- SRO or efficiency units sound good in terms of housing chronic homeless individuals but it would be difficult to find areas where these units could be built in Long Beach.
- There are at least 20 boarded-up HUD housing units that could be restored to house the homeless. There is interest in finding out where these properties are and why they are not currently in use.
- Look into subsidies and or incentives such as tax breaks for owners who may have efficiency units already available.
- Obtain the support of City Council to approve housing subsidies/incentives
- Realize that owners may need some form of protection when the renting situation goes bad.
- Find out about SRO/efficiency units' programs in other cities where they have been successful, i.e., Seattle, to learn from those experiences.
- Use skilled labor among the homeless to rehab units.
- Beware of the fact that using skilled labor from among homeless individuals is complex due to insurance liabilities.
- Is there an estimate of how many individuals are truly mentally ill? Some people may fake they are mentally ill in order to receive services.
- Beware of the fact that zoning issues may always get in the way of finding housing for the homeless and it may be used as an excuse to not provide housing.

- Housing should take into account the needs of people with disabilities, i.e., ensure that buildings are accessible.

Homeless Prevention

Homeless prevention refers to the provision of supplemental resources to persons at risk for homelessness in order to keep them housed (as healthcare, food, transportation).

- Rent control is an issue that needs to be addressed in Long Beach. Stable rents are no longer realistic.
- Rent control is one solution, but there is also a need for a living wage. People are working but they cannot afford to pay for rent.
- Rent control is a bad idea because in reality it makes housing less available. Owners won't feel encouraged to rent anymore. Subsidies are a better option.
- There is nothing in Long Beach for people who are addicted to alcohol or drugs.
- Is there any involvement from the County?
- Social services are almost non-existent in Long Beach—There is credit counseling and vocational/occupational counseling
- Current plans are just a “window dressing,” people need to think out of the box.
- Need to be aware of how to best utilize funding and resources (County and City)
- Homeless families probably spend more money when they are homeless than when they are housed. People are more than willing to pay rent. They need support on how to find housing. They are willing to pay rent but they are unable to find housing.

Transitional Homeless Persons

On a given year there are people who become homeless. These are families for whom SRO will not be appropriate. The following miscellaneous comments were made, although I am not sure how they related to the issue.

- It is sad when people have to admit to using substances in order to get housing (social worker from S. California Alcohol Program, based on in-house study).
- Long Beach has a Transitional Housing Program that has not opened yet. It is only for single men and women, and only for those who are working.
- It would be important to come up with some form of Security Deposit Trust Fund that is supported by the City and that can be offered once to individuals who have to come up with a security deposit for housing and they do not have the funds.

Other Comments/observations

- Perhaps it would be a good idea to have another meeting in District 3 to tackle the issues now that people have had an opportunity to vent. Individuals were invited at this point to be part of the Working Group.

- Connie Sziebl informed the meeting attendees that there is a Regional approach to homeless issues that takes into account 26 cities. It is up to the City Mayor to work on this particular 10 Year Strategy at a local level.
- The website can be found by typing_____and using the links. Susan Price from DHHS has requested that the website be moved up to a link where it is easier to find.
- Council member Frank Colonna came at the end of the meeting due to a previous commitment and offered some words.
- Notes from all District meetings will be posted online.

Next Steps:

- Attendees were encouraged to fill out contact information and to pick up the three handouts.
- Business Cards were available to all participants for Corinne Schneider, Manager, Bureau of Human and Social Services and Ginger McKay, Assistant Program Coordination, 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.
- The City of Long Beach will hold meetings in all city districts over a period of approximately 3 months to obtain ideas, suggestions, and comments.

Attendees were encouraged to fill out a form if they were interested in signing as a volunteer for the program.

Comments and suggestions from this meeting will go to the Working Group who will in turn inform to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will make the final recommendations that inform the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness.

Adjourned